

Practical DISCOURSE

OF THE

SIN against the

Holy Ghost:

Shewing Plainly,

- I. What it is.
- II. How any Person may certainly know, whether he has been Guilty of it.

DESIGNED

To bring Incouragement to the Faithful Penitent, Tranquility of Mind to the Obedient, Joys to them that Love; and the Returning Sinner from Desperation.

By Dr. *Sharpe*, D. D.

Matth. xii. 31, 32. *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.*

Licens'd according to Order.

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The AUTHOR's Dedication and Prayer.

Blessed TRINITY,

From an Affectionate and willing Spirit, from a desiring to please Thee, and to be in all things right toward Thee; I humbly Dedicate this Discourse to the Uses of thy Glory, Love, and Obedience; begging this only for my self, That I may not Preach to others, and be my self a Cast-away: "For thy Faithful People, begging Pardon and Peace, That they may be cleansed from all their Sins, and serve thee with a quiet Mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen, Amen.

A Practical Discourse of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

I. The Occasion of this Discourse.

BEfore I come to the more particular Enquiries, in shewing what the Sin against the Holy Ghost is, and the several Uses, which I would draw from the Consideration of the Nature, and the Meaning of this Unpardonable Blasphemy, and leave them upon the Affectionate Thoughts of those who have not yet quitted all their future Hopes and Expectations; nor desire to do so: I will stop a little to mention some of the Reasons, and

charitable Designations and Intentions of my Publishing a Discourse on this Subject. I am perswaded (and perhaps I have observ'd) That there are some devout Christians, who, for want of a Right and True Account, and full Knowledge of what this Sin is, have been discouraged from a Christian Course; or else have gone on heavily in their Devotions and Obedience; and in accomplishing (with Sincerity) those few Duties to God and Man, which our Ascended Saviour was pleas'd to leave us in Charge, when he went away; Fearing That they are Guilty of this Sin: And therefore that all that they do, or suffer, is to no Purpose. And, tho' they truly aim at Immortality; at a Blest and Joyful Resurrection; and at the Glory, Love and Obedience; and from an affectionate and a willing Spirit, and a Heart right towards God, Desire nothing so much as to please him; and to be train'd up, and fitted, and trimm'd and disciplin'd for an Admittance to a New World of blessed Spirits; and to come away and spend a Rapturous Eternity at the Feet of Jesus; yet all this while are afraid, they may have committed this Sin. And this cools their Love of God, hinders the Loveliness and the Chearfulness of their Duties, and keeps them off from a Religious Peace, and from the Prosecution of some Christian Actions, which they would otherwise chearfully Perform. For their Sake therefore, in the first place, and to invite them to persevere with a Holy Constancy and Joy in the Commands of their Ascended Saviour: I will shew plainly and truly what this Sin is.

A second sort of Men there are, That by the Prevalency and Power of a strong Temptation, have made some dismal Recessions from their Baptismal Innocence; and are sensible that they have fallen into a Sin, and have displeased their God. But they would

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quickly and humbly return to their offended Father, with the Penitent Prodigal, were they not afraid they had been guilty of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy* against the *Holy Ghost*: And for this Reason they are discourag'd in their Repentances, and their Return to the Ways of God; or at least go on very heavily in them; with no Joy or Chearfulness, or holy Purposes and Resolutions: Which they say, they would quickly, and thankfully and sincerely do, were they sure they had not been Guilty of this Sin. For their sakes also, will I plainly shew what 'tis.

A third sort I find there are, that have been very great Sinners; Having long liv'd in a State of great Inconsideration, and Carelessness; Profaneness and Neglect of the Soul and Immorality. And they conclude, That among so great a heap and conjuration of Sins, which they have committed, 'tis ten to one, but they have been guilty of this too: And therefore, That 'tis to no manner of Purpose to return and seek a Reconciliation with their God; For their day (they think) is over: And if they should return to the Ways of God, and choose better; and live the Holy Life, which is much the easier, and the sweeter Life of the two, yet they suppose all's in Vain; They have committed this Sin; and the Door of Mercy is shut against them: And that now they had e'en as good let all run against the Rocks, and let alone the Soul, and take no care about it; But take their fill of Sensuality and Wickedness, and lie down in a State of Inconsideration and Prophane-ness.

And for the Sake of these also, will I plainly, truly, and clearly shew, what this Sin is. That so the one sort may see infinite Cause to return to their offended Father quickly: And tho' it be with Fear

and Trembling, yet may do it also, with a holy Hope, great Encouragements, and a Religious Chearfulness too; provided it be with a *Present, Universal, and Permanent Change.*

And the other sort, namely, the Person of a sincere Probity and Sanctity of Life, may go on in a Course of Faith and Devotion, Piety and Charity, Divine Love and Obedience, with a Holy Joy and a Religious Peace.

II. *What the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is.*

THAT I may make the present Discourse as satisfactory as I can, to every Reader, and as useful as I can for the Designs and Purposes, and Needs and Desires, of every Christian; That the Sinner may be encouraged and invited to return to his God, and his own truest Interest, by a speedy, a sincere, and a perserving Repentance; and all may be encouraged, and endeared to go on chearfully in a Religious Course, *in the Ways of Pleasantness, and in the Paths of Peace;* (*Prov. 3. 17.*) I will plainly insist on these three Things:

First, Shew what this Sin is.

Secondly, Give a Rule how any Person may assuredly know, whether he has been guilty of it or not.

Thirdly, Shew the very great Likelihood, that you (Christian Reader) have not yet been guilty of this Sin.

From all which three Particulars, I shall draw three Practical Inferences, or Instances of Application.

I. Shew, What this Sin is.

The Sin, or *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, was (as appears in this Chapter, *St. Matth. 12.*)

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the Sin of the Pharisees; and in short, 'twas this: *They Blasphem'd the Holy Ghost, in affirming, That those Miracles which the Holy Jesus wrought by the Power of the Holy Ghost, were done by the Power of the Devil: And consequently deny'd him, who did them, to be the Christ.*

And the Heinousness of it consisted in This: By these Miracles which he wrought (by the Power of the Holy Ghost) he design'd to convince them that he was the *Messias*; And would by this Light, manifest to them plainly, that he acted by the Power of the *Holy Spirit* of God: He charitably designed those very Miracles which they reproachfully imputed to the Devil, to be a convincing Testimony from God, that he must be the *Messias*, the *Christ*, the *Saviour* of the World. No; they would not be persuaded; would not come in to his Faith, and his Love, and his Obedience; but would wilfully resist and oppose the Power of his Doctrine, and his Miracles; The convincing Light of which, plainly and clearly manifested, that he acted by the Power of God. And rather than they would acknowledge them to be done by the Power of the *Holy Ghost*, they affirm'd, That he did them, by the Power of the Devil, v. 24.

Upon this, Christ to convince them, is pleased to tell them, That the Miracle of casting out Devils (which he had wrought just before) could not be done by the Power of the Devil; *For a Kingdom divided against its self could not stand*, v. 25. And therefore 'twas not likely that *Satan* should cast out *Satan*: And if *Satan* could not, or would not cast out *Satan*, then surely it must be by the Power of the *Holy Spirit* of God, that he cast out Devils and wrought Miracles. And if so, how could they choose, when they saw the Miracles that he did, but be con-

vinced that he acted by the Power of God? And consequently, how could they resist and oppose, deny and disown him to be the *Christ*, the *Messias*, the *Saviour* of the World. 'Twas all as one: They would not be convinced by the holy Doctrines which he Taught, by the Miracles he wrought, and Wonders that he did: And rather than believe on him, and become Wise and Happy, they obstinately affirm'd, That what he did by the Finger of God, and the *Power of the Holy Ghost*, was done by the *Power of the accursed Spirits of Darknes*.

Now, this was not only a great *Blasphemy* indeed against the *Holy Ghost*; But, 'twas a wilful shutting their Eyes against the Light: Against the Light (I say against) of that Doctrine, and those Miracles, which were done on purpose to convince them that he was the *Christ*; whom notwithstanding they deny'd and disown'd, resisted and oppos'd. Upon this, *Christ* tells them, That if they continued in this *Blasphemy*, and would obstinately go on, to impute those Miracles, to the Devil, which were done by the Power of the *Holy Ghost*, and would not be convinced and come in, and Receive and Believe on the Lord of Glory, but deny and oppose him, and maliciously and with a wilful Blindness, hold out against the visible Work of God; That this must needs be to them that continue in it, unpardonable. And well indeed might it be unpardonable, when the Apostle says, *Act. 4. 12. There is none other Name, under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* That his Name and Person; His Revelation, and his Love; His Message, and his Designs; His Doctrine, and his Miracles, should be denied and disowned, opposed and rejected, and their Eyes obstinately shut against all the convincing Arguments of his Doctrine and his Miracles, that he was the *Saviour of the World*. But

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But here may be one Material, and important Question ask'd.

How comes it to pass, that 'tis not said in the Text, *Whosoever speaketh against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven*: How comes it to pass that the Speaking against Christ, should be more pardonable, than the Speaking against the Holy Ghost?

To this, I Answer. To speak against the Son of Man, *i. e.* against Christ, only before he was manifested to be the *Messias*, by the *holy Spirit* of God, and the convincing Miracles which he did: This might be a *Sin of Ignorance*, and therefore pardonable upon a general *Repentance*. But to speak against the *Holy Ghost*, *i. e.* to resist the holy Spirit of God, which manifestly appear'd in the Miracles which Christ wrought on purpose to convince them, this could be no *excusable Ignorance*; but must be a *wilful Blindness*. Nay, to impute them to the *Devil*, on purpose, because they would not be convinc'd by them, to come in to Christ, and receive and own him: Surely, such a contradicting and crossing his gracious Ends, and merciful Designations to them, could be no other than an obstinate, wilful Blindness, and a shutting their Eyes against the Light. And therefore (if continu'd in) could not but be unpardonable. And that's the Difference between speaking barely against the Son of Man, *before he was manifested* to be so, by Miracles, and by the Power of the Holy Ghost; and the Speaking against him, *after he was manifested* to be so, by Miracles, and by the Power of the Holy Ghost.

The one (as I said) might be a pardonable Ignorance; But the other must be an excusable wilful Blindness.

II I. *The Blasphemy of the Pharisees, Unpardonable no longer than wilfully and impenitently continued in.*

BUT now consider, Christian; neither was the Blasphemy of the Pharisees an *unpardonable Sin*, any longer than 'twas wilfully impenitently continued in. This I prove from their very Case here, who were guilty of this Sin.

None could deny our Lord more, or oppose him more than his very Crucifiers: yet even of them his very words are to God; *Father, forgive them*; That is, Deny them not the means of Forgiveness, which is Repentance: and deny them not Forgiveness, if they shall return and repent. And no doubt Christ was heard, in all that he pray'd for. So that even they that at first resisted and opposed Christ, if afterwards they receiv'd and acknowledg'd him, by the convincing Considerations of his Doctrine and his Miracles; and with a sincere and humble Conformity of Heart and Life, to his Faith and Doctrine, laid hold on God's Mercy in Christ; even to these, Pardon and Remission is not deny'd by the Gospel.

Something of an Example of this, we have in St. Peter, in that shameful, and wretched, and dismal fall of his, in denying our Saviour. Here was no Ignorance; for he knew him, and own'd him to be the *Messias*, or the Christ. But yet being prevail'd upon by a sudden Fear; He deny'd him: and not only deny'd the Lord that bought him, three Times, but swore him away too. St. Matt. 26. 27. Here was a disowning and denying of him indeed; and that too, after he had been convinced, that he was the *Messias*, by the Power and Influence of the *Holy Ghost*; and had upon that, received him, and acknowledged

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knowledged, and own'd him: A denial of them therefore, against his own *Light, Knowledge, and Conviction.*

And what, (you'll say) was not this a Sin against the *Holy Ghost*?

To this I Answer: Had he obstinately persisted in it; wilfully continued in it: and liv'd and dy'd in it; it had been the *Sin against the Holy Ghost.*

But in *St. Peter's Case*, there are always three Things very Considerable.

First, *'Twas by a sudden Fear*, (sudden surprize of that Passion) that he fell.

Secondly, *The Quickness and Bitterness of his Repentance.* His Master look'd upon him, and he consider'd what he had done, and recall'd himself, and went out and wept bitterly.

Thirdly, *What was most considerable; The truth of his Repentance, appear'd by the Truth, and Perseverance of his Reformation:* For, no Fears could afterward any more prevail upon him; For he had the Courage to die for him, whom he had before deny'd.

These were three Things that were infinitely Considerable; And here (Dear Christian) give me leave to stop a little, to bring them home to your Case, even yours in particular. Perhaps, with *St. Peter*, thou hast falln too, *Knowingly and Wittingly*; against *Knowledge, Light and Conviction*: If so, Consider what he did, and go, do thou likewise; and like him, do it *Quickly, Sincerely and Perseveringly*, and you shall not fail of Mercy. Perhaps a sudden Fear, or a sudden Passion, or a sudden Surprize has betray'd thee to a Sin: Nay, perhaps it has not only been sudden, but *deliberate*; with open Eyes, and a full Consent of the Will: However, do thou as he did: Return to thy offended Saviour with Penitential Sorrows; By Faith lay hold on God's Mercies
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in him; Shew him the *Truth of thy Repentance*, by the *Sincerity of thy Reformation*; Crown and Perfect thy Repentance, by *labouring to obtain the Contrary Virtue, and living in it*: But withal, do it *quickly* as he did, and *persevere sincerely* too; and doubt not of the Mercies of Eternity. *He did it quickly*; He did not stay till Death-bed fill'd him with variety of Distractions, Pains and Agonies, and unfitted him for it: He did not stay till the worst of his days, those which lay upon his Hand and were for Nothing: He did not keep those for God, which he knew not what to do with himself; but he did it quickly. He did it Sincerely next: As appeared by the Shower of Penitential Tears; which could not have dropt so soon, had he not been in good Earnest with his dearest Lord; and had they not proceeded from a heart swollen with Grief and Love. And, last of all he did it Perseveringly; And in this Respect, go and do thou likewise: Shew him thy Love in the sincere *Permanency* of thy Reformation as he did: who having thrice following, deny'd him, did in a little time after say to him thrice following these Affectionate words (and made them good too) Lord, thou knowest that I love thee, St. John 21. 15, 16, 17. Hast thou faln? Why, oh thou why wilt thou for any *Hopes* or *Expectations*; Any *Fears* or *Desires*, any *Delights* or *Advantages*, continue a day longer in thy Sin? Do but look yonder in a holy Meditation, to that Lovely Futurity which so many wise Men have been content to live, and content to die for; and then see if you can be the Person, that can think fit to venture so much for so little? Look, in a quick and a piercing Thought, look yonder, to what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the Heart of Man conceiv'd; and think then whether a wise Man should be able to find it in his Heart, to venture

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Once more do but raise your Meditations (Dear Christian) to the lovely Regions of beatified Spirits; Regions which cost thy Saviour an Agony and a Bloody Sweat, a Crucifixion and Death itself, to purchase you the hopeful possibility of them; and then see in that Thought if you can always be content they should *cost you nothing*? Nothing of Penitential Sorrows; Nothing of the Pains of subduing a Temptation; Nothing of the self-denial of being without the Pleasures of a Sin; Nothing of the Diligence, and Watchfulness, and Care, of a Reformed State? Come then, O come, my Soul, say, Seeing our Case is yet Hopeful, or at least not Desperate, let us from this moment be content, that one short Life should cost us as much as this comes to, till all be over and ended, and we are consign'd to our new, and unknown, and eternal State and Condition.

IV. *How any Person may assuredly know, whether he has been Guilty of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.*

HAVING seen what the *Sin against the Holy Ghost* is; That is, what it was in the Pharisees: I shall presently shew what it is, in them who have been baptized, and have been Believers.

But before I come to That, I will stop a little; to shew how any Person may assuredly Judge, whether they have committed this *Unpardonable Sin*, or not. Now that no Man may mistake, or, be at a loss in This, and dwell in the uncomfortable State of Irresolution and uncertainty, take this Rule:

'Tis certain, no Man commits a Sin against the Holy

Holy Ghost, if he be afraid he hath, and desires he had not.

And the Reason of it is this: Because such Penitential Passions, Desires and Affections are against the very Definition, or Nature of *this Sin*. For, where-ever these are found; These, Humble, Holy Fears to offend God, and desires to please him; these Penitential Passions and Affections; there has not yet, and cannot have been, a *Witting*, a *Willing*, a *Malicious* and *total Apostacy*, or falling off from the Faith of Christ, and the Gospel. And yet such an Apostacy, or Falling off 'tis; such an Opposition and Denial of our Saviour, as that makes it the *Unpardonable Sin*; to one that is, or has been a Believer.

1. It must be *Knowingly*, and not of Ignorance.
2. It must be a *Willing* Apostacy, or Denial; and not of Force or Compulsion.
3. It must be *Malicious*; and not of Infirmary.
4. It must be a *total* Falling off; and not of some particular Sin:

It must be all These to make up the full Measure of the *Unpardonable Sin*. So that as I before said, all penitential Passions and Affections; All your Doubts and Fears lest you should have been guilty of it, and your Desires that you had not; are against the very Nature of *this Sin*.

These Things (as I shall hereafter shew) are infinite Incouragements to the *Poor, Humble, Faithful Penitent*; to go on earnestly, and chearfully, and with Great Resolutions in his Repentances; And in all his Faithful and Affectionate Desires to fit himself for the Merits and Satisfaction of his *Saviour*.

And with all, they are an infinite incouragement to the Devout, yet humble Christian, to go on with a great joy, even in the midst of his *Fears* and *Tremblings*; To persevere a little longer, (till his Day of Probation

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Probation be once over) in all the Parts and Instances, and Duties of a holy Life; In the Conscientious Performance of these few Commands, which our Ascended Saviour was pleased to leave us in Charge, when he went away.

Come then, (Dear Christ) Arise, and go on *Quickly* and *Perseveringly* in thy Penitential Resolutions; and in thy Faithful Desires and Purposes, to *cleanse* thy polluted Soul by the Waters of Repentance; and to fit it for the *Healing* Blood of thy Saviour.

Perhaps, Thou hast fallen from Baptismal Innocence, by some known Sin; and with *Grief* and *Love*; you do easily remember some dismal Instances of Ingratitude and Disobedience to your Master; But yet whilst you own there is *Salvation in none other*; and can *allow your self* in no one Instance of that Disobedience; but desire nothing more than to reconcile him to you, by the Ways and Methods of his own Appointment: Why, consider, tho' you have been a Sinner, you have been no Apostate; you have neither fallen off from him, nor disowned, or oppos'd the Faith of your Saviour, and his holy Religion.

And till this be done; Till thou *Knowingly*, *Willingly*, *Maliciously* and *Totally*, fallest off from him, opposhest and deniest him; thou hast not filled up the full Measure of this *Unpardonable Blasphemy*. How true, and how great an Incouragement this should be to the *Quickness*, the *Sincerity*, and the *Permanency* of thy Repentance; and thy return to him, and the Peace and Ease, and Serenity, and Delicacies of a Holy Life, you'll see presently.

V. *The great Likelihood that you (Christian Reader) have not yet been Guilty of this Sin.*

BY the Tryal of your self (Dear Christian) by the foregoing Rule, you'll be able, to make a
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Right Judgment of your State, in this particular ; and will find great Likes that you have not yet drawn upon your self the Guilt of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy*. And if not ; what Infinite Encouragement have you, (even you in particular, whatever others intend to do) to go on, in a Chearful Probity and Sanctity of Life ; a chearful Love and Obedience to your dearest Master. And what infinite Encouragement has the *Sinner* to become a Penitent ? Provided he do it *Seasonably* and *Quickly* ; *Sincerely* and with *Perseverance*. What infinite Encouragement has the *Poor*, *Humbling*, *Trembling*, *Doubting* Christian, to take chearfully upon him henceforward the Easie Yoke and Light Burden of his Saviour ; In the Faithful Discharge of these few Commands and Duties, to our *God*, our *Selves*, and *Neighbours*, which he has pleased to leave with us.

And from him who has sincerely begun for Heaven and Immortality ; for a blessed and a joyfuf Resurrection : How great an Incouragement it is to continue to be all that is Holy, Just, and Good ; a little longer, till his day be over ; and he be called to lay aside his Business here, and come away to a New, and a Better World. To think, and to be assured that you have not yet been guilty of the *Unpardonable Sin* : But may yet, if you persevere (through the Merits of your Saviour) fill one of the vacant seats of the fain Angels.

That you, even you too, may yet, (if you persevere) be one of those Beatified Spirits that shall pass away with him in a rapturous and a pleasurable Eternity. That you, even you too, are not yet so far gone ; but may, if you please, (through the Divine Grace ; always ready for those that beg, and those that use it) be one of those Souls that may cause joy in Heaven, by a quick and a persevering ;
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and a sincere Return to the Commands and Laws, the Faith and Love of your Crucified Master.

For, do but give me leave to *Examine your Case*, as to *this Sin*, a little further. Perhaps you have been a *Sinner*; in some dismal Degrees and Instances. And this, even This, has been infinitely unkind and ungrateful; to have been so, towards a tender Father, and a Compassionate Redeemer: This, even This has been dismal; to Affront and Abuse so much Goodness; and to hazard thy cwn future Hopes and Expectations, by any known *Actual Sin*; and much more by any *Habitual one*.

But come Christian, Though this is sad and dismal, can you have a better Encourage ment quickly to return, than this: That you have not been guilty of the *Unpardonable Sin*. Oh come, let this melt Thee into *Love*, and endear Thee to *Obedience*. Let this melt Thee into Penitential Tears; Tears of Grief, as well as Tears of Love; Tears of Hope, and Tears of Joy too, as well as Tears of Repentance; That this Sin and Blasphemy is not chargeable upon thee.

To Examine a little further; has thou been guilty of an *Utter Wilful*, and *Spiteful* rejecting of the Gospel of Salvation, by the Holy Jesus? Hast thou been guilty of This, notwithstanding that in thy Conscience thou wert convinced, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Faith and Holiness, is the Way to be saved? Hast thou been guilty of an advised and absolute falling away from the Profession of the Faith of Christ, so far, that against former Knowledge and Conscience thou dost *maliciously* Oppose and Blaspheme the *Holy Spirits of God* in the Word and in the Ordinances of the Gospel? Hast thou so far rejected, resisted, and utterly quenched the Perswasions and Motions of the Spirit of God

working formerly upon your Heart and Affections; as, out of hatred to Christ, to Oppose and Deny and Disown him and his Doctrines? Or so far, as thus to Crucifie to your self afresh the Son of God; and by disowning him, *to put him to open Shame.* (Heb. 6.6.) *Treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the Blood of the Covenant wherewith you were sanctified, an unholy Thing; or Thus done despite to the Spirit of Grace?* Then indeed (hadst thou also totally and finally continued in this State, and liv'd and dy'd in it) hadst thou been guilty of this *Unpardonable Sin.* Which Sin (by the way) is also called the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and becomes Unpardonable, because 'tis against the Office of the Holy Ghost; and against his Gracious Operations of the Holy Spirit; whose business and office 'tis to perswade us to receive Christ crucified, and the Faith and Doctrine of the Gospel. Well; Tho' thou hast then been a Sinner, and unkindly Grieved the Holy Spirit of Love; yet thou hast been no Apostate: That is, Thou hast yet been Guilty of no Willing, Malicious, Total falling off from Christ, and the Faith and Doctrine of the Gospel, tendred to thee by the Holy Ghost, and against the Light and Convictions of that Sacred Spirit; thou hast not yet *denied him*, and by a *wilful Blindness oppos'd him too.*

If things are thus with thee, (Sinner) as I verily believe they are, *Come*, be so far Comforted, as chearfully, but yet quickly and sincerely, to return to thy offended God and Saviour; and do not stay in the Confines of Desperation any longer than you dwell in your Sin. Here stop a little (Dear Christian) and be perswaded to Consider the great Cause you have to Resolve presently, and intirely to cast off the Sin that does so easily beset you; and to choose Vicer and Better, and to Return to the Ways of your Master, with speed and care, and consolation too. Do it quickly and sincerely, and I do assure you, your Case is yet Desperate. Come (Dear Christian) after such a thought as This, Try if thou canst find it in your Heart, *front* *much as ever*, by the voluntary Omission

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on of any known necessary Duty. And then presently in a Holy Meditation look up to him, with Reverential Love, where he is now preparing a Place for you, (if you will) and say to him, with an affectionate Humility. Blessed Jesus! Long hast thou staid for me, and not given me up to a Reprobate Spirit; but thou shalt stay no longer: Thou hast long look'd for me, and not given me up to a Spirit of Desperation; but thou shalt look for me no longer. I can hold out longer, I will hold out no longer, against so much Love and Mercy; So much Patience and Forbearance; So much Long-suffering and Goodness. I will, I can hold out no longer; let the Sin promise what it will, I will hold out no longer against Thee. Let the Duty cost what it will, I will hold out no longer against the endearing Calls and Intreaties of *Bleeding, Groaning, Agonizing, Dying* Love. No, I cannot. But seeing I have this Comfort, that I have not *Blasphemed thy Spirit*, or denied Thee; and have so great Cause to Hope, That I have not committed the *unpardonable Sin*; I am infinitely encouraged to come, and to come joyfully to do Thy Will: And I will come quickly, for I know the Night comes when none can work.

VI. *The first Practical Inference, or Instance of Application; from the Consideration of the Nature and Meaning of the Sin against the Holy Ghost: Viz. That 'tis Matter of great Encouragement for the Faithful Penitent to go on very Comfortably, but yet very Sincerely in his Repentances.*

HAVING thus finish'd my Three first Heads of Discourse, and shewn plainly what this Sin is, and how we may assuredly know whether we have committed it or not; and shown withal the great Likelihood that no Christian Reader has: I now come to few Inferences, or Uses.

Inferences which I would leave, not only upon the Understandings, but upon the Memory, and upon the Heart

and Affections, the Life and Actions of every Reader. That the Great Sinner may not despair of the Divine Mercy. That the faithful Penitent may be encouraged to go on, and with Comfort perfect his Repentances. That no Man may presume to continue in any known Sin : And, that the Poor, Humble, Doubting, but Devout Christian, may be encouraged to go on, with a Holy Joy, in Life of Faith and Devotion ; Piety and Charity ; Watchfulness and Care ; Probity and Sanctity ; Self-denial and Purity ; Love and Obedience ; a little longer, till his Day be over, and all be well with him, and he finds himself admitted to the New Glories of a better World.

1. *Practical Inference, from the Consideration of what has been said of the Sin against the Holy Ghost ; Here first Results Master of Encouragement for the Faithful Penitent to go on very Comfortably, but yet very Sincerely to end his Repentances.*

Thou hast saln, perhaps, from thy Baptifimal Innocence, and Affronted and Disobey'd a Tender Father ; ungratefully and unkindly abus'd all the Endearments of a Compassionate Redeemer, who was pleased to Die for you before you knew you needed him ; and have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were seal'd to the Day of Redemption, Eph. 4. 30. That you have done This, may be a true and dismal Truth. But perhaps too, you are extremely sensible that you have chosen amifs, and resolve to return and to choose Better and Wiser ; and with the Prodigal, (St. Luke 13.) to arise and go to your Father, and say, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son, make me as one of thy Servants.

It may be, you find it to be a great Truth, what the Wise King tells you, (Prov. 2. 17.) *That the ways of Religious Wisdom, are ways of Pleasanness, and all her Paths are Peace :* And it may be too you have found what the Prophet says, to be a great Truth. A Truth ; *Isai. 57. last. There is no Peace to the Wicked.* And finding all this to be true, by your own Experience ; you have been often thinking, and are now resolv'd to return to the Ways of God, and

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and a vertuous Course; and to be Wise and Happy. Why, if this be so speedy and sincere, and persevering, as that you find your self to be in good earnest with God and your Soul; here is then matter of infinite Incouragement, for you to go on, with a holy Joy, and a very great Chearfulness, That your Labour is not like to be in vain, in as much as the Unpardonable Sin has yet been none of yours.

And indeed tell me truly, Christian; Is it not infinitely better to cause Joy in Heaven, among the Beatified Spirits of the upper Lovely Regions, than Joy only to the Accursed Spirits of Darknes? Methinks, to a Wise Man, it should be infinitely more desirable and chusable to have a good Report of him among the Beautiful Inhabitants of the upper World, than only among a few wicked, and mistaken People Here.

And if you will presently resolve to be so Wise and Happy, (for if you will, you may; and these Blessed Spirits desire it, and look for it) as to cause Joy among these Blessed and sweet, and lovely, and glorious Inhabitants, the Joy will be your own: The Peace and Joy will be your own, first and last too: Yours here, and yours hereafter. And if you may cause these Joys to your self and them, tell me (Dear Christian) why will you not? why should not you, be earnest to do so; Considering the very Comfortable Hopes you have, that the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, has been none of your Sin?

For, if there be no Peace to the wicked, no true Joy; and if there be Joy in Heaven at the Conversion of a Sinner, and Joy to himself too, on Earth; Joys above, and Joys below; some Joys in Hand, and some in Reversion; some Present, and some Future; can there be a greater Madness, than to deny your self these True Joys, for any Iniquity whatever; in which there can be neither Peace, nor Joy; no long Peace, or lasting Joy? Come now (Christian) upon a view of both, take which of the Two you please. Either the Stings and Gnawings; The Shame and the Dishonour; The Lashings and the Rendings; The Inward Bittings and Uneasiness; The Discomposures and Disor-

ders;

A Practical Discourse of the

ders; The Heart-Achings, and Heaviness of Soul; The Fearfulness and Dissatisfactions of Mind; The Unquiet Days, Restless Nights, of an Irreligious, a Careless and a Profane Curle: Or, do This: Cause Joy in Heaven, as well as Joy and Peace to your Self, by a speedy Conversion from such an Uneasie Course, to the Love and Obedience of your Saviour, and the Ways of Holiness. And blessed be God, That the Choice is yet put to you; and That you have not yet drawn upon your self the Guilt of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy*. 'Tis true, indeed, you may if you please (Christian) Call the Stings and Gnawings; the Shame and the Dishonours; The Fearfulness and Dissatisfactions of Mind; The Fretting and Uneasiness of a Sinful Course; you may Call them Joys: But yet, oh that the Inconsiderate Sinner would but try the Difference. The Difference (I mean) between the No-Peace of a Wicked and a Profane Course; and the unknown Peace and Delicacies of a Vertuous one.

All the Wisest, and all the Best, and Discreetest Men of the World, that could see furthest into these Things, have done so: and they have quickly been convinced of the Truth of them. And why will not you be that Happy Person (Christian)? What should hinder you from being Wise for your self, and Wise for your Eternity? Wise for your Truest, and your best Interest? Or, If you will not have me ask you the Question, yet do This: Ask your self the Question, in your next Retirements, when you are alone, and with-drawn from the World. Why, my Soul, (say) Why shall not I be That Happy Person, That shall cause Joy in Heaven, and Joy to my self; Joy Above, and Joy Below; Joys Present, and Future Joys, by my speedy Conversion from Sin to God, from my bosom, darling Sin? (My Sin —) Especially considering the Hopes we have of being yet Successful, if we are speedy, sincerely, and persevering.

The *Unpardonable Blasphemy* has been none of our Sin. Why come, then let us presently arise and go to our Father: and return quickly with the Prodigal. And then for a little

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the Time that we have yet left for Eternity, we'll Labour Chearfully to continue in our Father's House, and Favour, by the few Rules of Probity and Sanctity, which our Ascended Saviour was pleased to leave with us, when he went away. Till our short Day be ended, and the Curtain be drawn, and we give way to the next Age, and we be securely put away to the Rest; and then our Work is over.

From what has been said of the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*; it appears very likely (Christian) that thou hast not been Guilty of that *Unpardonable Blasphemy*. Thou hast not with the Pharisees Blasphem'd him, in affirming, That the Miracles which thy Saviour wrought by the Power of the *Holy Ghost*, were done by the Devil; Nor hast thou made use of this as an Argument to deny him to be the Christ. Thou hast not yet been Guilty of a Known, Malicious, and Total Falling off from, and Denying the Faith of Christ, and the Doctrine of the Gospel. Thou hast not yet been Guilty of an Utter, Wilful, Spiteful rejecting of the Faith and Doctrine of Christianity; notwithstanding that thou wert convinc'd, that Jesus is the Christ. Thou can'st not Charge these Things upon thy self; and therefore there is Reason to believe thou hast not committed the Unpardonable Sin.

So far, indeed, thy Case is Hopeful. But alas! Perhaps all this while, thou livest in some known, wilful Sin: Thou continuest impenitently in some one such Guilt; takest no Care to get out of it, to return to thy God by Repentance, and Reformation, and to obtain the Contrary Virtue, and live in it. If this be thy Case, last mention'd, what does it signify, That thou hast not been Guilty of the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*? For our Saviour tells us, *Except ye Repent, ye shall all likewise Perish*. Thou hast not been Guilty, (very probably) of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy*: But alas! that other known, wilful Sin continu'd in, is (so long as 'tis continu'd in) *the Unpardonable Sin*.

And let this be Matter of Terrour and Reproof, and just Cause of Trembling to the Careless, and the Impenitent, and the Habitual Sinner.

Suppose

Suppose thou hast not been Guilty of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy*: Ay, but what if thy Lord come and find any other Known Iniquity; (thy darling Bosom-Vice especially) *unreform'd, unrepented of, unmortify'd, continu'd* in, by Thee? Can'st thou expect then to be found in his Favour?

If thou art found out of the *Covenant of Grace*, that is, continuest in some known Disobedience to him impenitently; thou hast then Reason (so long as you so continue) to expect as little Mercy as if thou hadst committed the Unpardonable Sin. And how should this Consideration, drive thee to a Quick and a Persevering Repentance of that known Sin, be it what it will.

Dear Christian, the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, was a Sin which you have sometime been afraid you had committed: You knew not what it was; and therefore could not tell, but that you might sometime or other have been guilty of it. And This (perhaps) has fill'd you full of Doubts, and Fears, and Tremblings; and has check'd and hindred you from going on chearfully in your Christian Course: or at least has made you go on heavily in it, without Comfort, and Holy and Vigorous Resolutions.

But now let the Sincerely Obedient Person, and the devout Lover of Jesus, be Comforted: For seeing there is so very great Likes, nay, so great a Certainty that he has not been Guilty of this Sin; what infinite Encouragement has he to go on Chearfully in the Faith, and Love, and Obedience of his Master? And in the sincere Performance of all Known Duties to God and Man: *To be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as he knows, that his Labour is not in vain in the Lord,* 1 Cor. 13.

F I N I S.

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